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THE

CLERICAL PORTRAIT;

A STUDY

FOR

THE YOUNG DIVINE.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

"Thou, *my son*, — study to show thyself approved unto God, a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word "of truth."

"And I beseech you, *brethren*, suffer the word of exhortation."

TIM. ii. 1-15. HEB. xiii. 22.

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1824.

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BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA ·

MARCHANT, PRINTER, INGRAM-COURT, LONDON.

TO THE

PARENT AND GUARDIAN

OF THE

YOUNG CANDIDATE

FOR THE

MINISTERIAL OFFICE;

THIS LITTLE VOLUME, RECOMMENDING,

IN A

SERIES OF FAMILIAR LETTERS, FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON,

The Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England,

AND ESPECIALLY ENFORCING

THE DUTIES INCUMBENT UPON THE PAROCHIAL CLERGY,

IS AFFECTIONATELY AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages comprehend what has been hitherto a great desideratum to the younger clergy, namely, a *compendium* of those important duties, both in public and private, which the Church of England imposes upon her ministers. Perhaps the Author would have done more wisely had he consulted with the view to abridge the counsel and commentaries of others, but as that which he now recommends has been

the foundation of his own endeavours to fulfil his duty, and as he is assured that this duty has been well or ill performed, as he approached or receded from the rules now laid down, he can conscientiously suggest them to the practice of a brother.

The advice embodied in the several letters is given with the remoter view of forming the character of a "young divine," whose interests the Author has deeply at his heart; but it may happily prove serviceable to many others. By a familiar exposition of the doctrine and discipline of the Church establishment, he may prevail with those now entering upon the arduous duties of the clerical appointment, seriously to think upon the responsibility they undertake,—to learn at once to do their duty, and to strive to do it well—at the same time to

be on their guard against the modern innovations of *soi-disant* reformers, who, mistaking the character of their religion, by throwing an unnatural gloom over the cheerful face of Christianity, injure that hallowed cause which, by the most solemn obligations, they are bound to prosper and defend.

THE UNDER GRADUATE.

THE

CLERICAL PORTRAIT,

&c. &c.

LETTER I.

THE UNDER GRADUATE.

My dear Boy,

When I look back for a moment on the chequered life I led at the University, mixing, judiciously (as I then thought), the *utile* with the *dulce*, and rewarding every hour's toil with three or four of recreation, I confess I have a considerable inclination to atone by present watchfulness for past neglect.

To mispend that time which can never be recalled is to "lay up in store for ourselves," against the days to come, a heavy load of bitterness. To contrast what *might* have been done with what *has* been done, the duties required with the duties performed, and to find that the compliances are lamentably out of proportion to the demands,—these are reflections that never fail to bring their own punishments with them.

Thus far, in common with my fellow collegians, I cannot but feel that I have much to answer for, and my earliest act of reparation shall be to raise the warning voice for you. The errors of a college life are neither calculated to profit nor to please; nor should they ever be recorded, save as a timely caution to the youthful student.

There will be a certain portion of time which the discipline of your college will

claim at your hands. But the advantages to be derived from the public lecture must be improved by private study; and by study I would be understood to speak of hours set apart for various readings. By way of illustration;—in the morning, one hour for the classics, a second for the mathematics, a third, for other college exercises. The same system for the evening, with the understanding that some portion of every day be devoted to serious reading for that profession to which you are more immediately destined. Remember, of the remaining hours of the twenty-four, how few are required for the recruiting of nature, and how many may then be given to recreation—even to innocent amusement, and cheerful and reputable society; these contributing to make your return to stated duties a pleasure instead of a toil.

There is one great disadvantage under

which, in common with your father, you will enter upon the studies of a college life. I much regret that my circumstances will not enable me to give you the benefit of a public education. Not originally intended for the profession of which I am now a member, I had much lost time to recover, and some new languages to learn, while a preparatory student in the family of a clergyman, who toiled most conscientiously to put me on a par with my cotemporaries at the University. His kind labours were but partially successful. Though, I believe, I read to greater advantage with him than I have ever done since, I painfully felt my inferiority to the men from public schools. There are many little essentials of classical knowledge taught at those public seminaries which are not attended to by the private tutor. I am aware that this is not universally the case; indeed, I well remember one young man at the University who

furnished a brilliant exception to this general rule. Nor would I by any means be understood to undervalue the advantages of private instruction—it is as valuable an introduction to the sacred duties of the clerical profession as is the other to the studies at the University. If the *head* be more the province of the public mode of instruction, the *heart* is more the study of that which is private. The first aims at the accomplishments of the scholar,—the second, at the moral and religious character of the man. The school arms the young adventurer with weapons for his literary warfare—the home of the clergyman heals the wounds of the battle, and sobers the spirit of the conqueror for a calmer duty in the paths of peace. There are unavoidable mischiefs resulting to the individual from the multitudinous intercourse of the school, which are never attendant upon the limited establishment of the country curate. If the

one tend more to the developement of talent, the other watches more sedulously over its progress towards maturity. Emulation is the growth of the first, perseverance is the fruit of the second. Thus each has its peculiar advantages, and, united, they furnish a most valuable testimonial to the aspirant after that good reputation which, begun at the University, follows the student through every path of life.

You will commence your young career of duty with a heart prepared, I trust, for trial, and resolved to overcome. I have endeavoured to make my instructions both religious and moral; to fix, not less the respectability of the man than the peculiar character of the Christian clergyman; to prevail with you to consider the duties of the minister as manifold and serious in their nature, his recreations as comparatively few. But the society, the new world, which opens

suddenly on the view of the young academic, will, if not judiciously selected, instead of strengthening the obligations to duty, and limiting the range of enjoyment, materially tend to narrow the demands of the one and give a greater latitude to the other. Unhappily, by no means slow to the belief of their own imputed consequence, and associating with many more than their equals in station, young men imbibe ideas of importance, not less unsuited to their future prospects than inconsistent with their present situations. Their error consists in selecting for their companions the outwardly attractive, rather than the inwardly worthy.

You will enter upon a college life with the conviction imprest upon your mind that your success in the future depends almost wholly on your conduct in the present.

As one of the large family of a country curate, who has little to depend upon but his daily labour for his daily bread, (and may the Almighty in his mercy grant me life to make those labours effectual!) you will have little to expect from me, your chief reliance will be, therefore, on yourself. The hopes of those most interested in your well doing are centred in your present good intentions; they will anxiously watch over the developement of those talents which, improved by perseverance and allied to a good disposition of heart and virtuous conduct, will be the foundation of your future fame. You will enjoy a considerable advantage over me, inasmuch as I have trodden the path before you. I know what I *may* expect from you—and I will not expect too much; I would have you withstand those temptations to which I gave way; I would have you resolute where I was yielding—strong

where I was weak. So far from wishing you to seclude yourself from the young and engaging world that will surround you, I say to you,—in the intervals of study, seek recreation in society, but be extremely careful as to the character of those with whom you associate. Let the good old proverb ever live in your remembrance, "A man is known by the company he keeps;" believe me, it holds good in every walk of life, but it is especially necessary in your choice of society at college. Be not over anxious to fix the rich and great for your companions, unless they be rich and great in moral and religious worth. Remember Juvenal's definition of the only true nobility. The virtues of the heart and the endowments of the mind will, I trust, prove a far greater attraction to you than the tuft on the cap and the lace on the gown. You will doubtless meet with some, even among these more favoured children of

fortune, whose society will prove both useful and agreeable.

Disparity of rank at the University is no barrier to strong attachments, and the maturer life of many amongst us has taken its colouring from connexions formed at college. Should it be your good fortune to make such an acquaintance, let no inducement lead you idly to resign it. You will have resources in each other that will place you beyond the reach of temptation from the thoughtless and dissipated of your community. It is only on a prudential principle that I charge you not to seek the society of your superiors—wait patiently till such seek you. If they are not what I briefly describe them, avoid them, be their rank and station what they may; their intercourse will necessarily lead you into expenses that would involve yourself and friends in inextricable difficulties.

It must not be concealed from you that your means will be very limited—there will be many whose pleasure it will be to scoff at the scantiness of your establishment. Heed it not; turn to your better adviser, he will direct your attention to those never-failing counsellors, who will strengthen your powers of resistance, and lift you far above the ridicule of the scorner. Your adversary will be disarmed; he will approve in secret what he openly condemns, and when the days of your university career are closed, he will be the first to acknowledge your title to those rewards of patient and virtuous perseverance, of which his own idleness has made him unmeet to be partaker.

So much has been so well said and written on this highly important subject, and your attention has been so often and seriously directed to it, that I shall not add more

than to pray fervently that God may dispose your heart to seriousness and guide you with his grace. Such will ever be the prayer of

Your affectionate Father, &c.

THE CURATE.

LETTER II.

THE CURATE.

I WILL now, my dear boy, suppose you graduated, ordained, and settled, in your curacy. You are no longer the independent, irresponsible collegian, with only your own time to husband, your own errors to answer for, your own salvation to secure. You are now a dependent responsible clergyman—the delegated minister of the church of Christ—a chosen vessel to bear the glad tidings of redemption to a large community, to prepare their hearts for the reception of God's grace, to exert their utmost efforts to make them good here, that they may be happy to all eternity. You are, be it repeated, dependent, responsible; for you are

dependent, not only on the will, but on the wants of a whole parish,—you are responsible for the present and everlasting well-being of many hundreds of your fellow-creatures;—you have their time to husband—their errors to answer for—and their souls will be solemnly required at your hands. This is, indeed, a momentous consideration. Pause, now that you have attained the summit of your toils—now that your foot is firmly planted in that "city that is set upon an hill." Pause, for one serious moment—not so much to look back on the troubles you have surmounted, or the difficulties you have mastered, as to look forward to the mighty labour, the great work, that is to be done—look onward to the end of time, for there eternity begins.

The minister of the Gospel has many difficulties to contend with ere he can conciliate the esteem and affection of his parish-

ioners. There are opposing prejudices in every community; there are long cherished opinions to be combated; there are objections deeply rooted to be removed, ere his flock can be of "one heart and one soul." In opposing these objections, in combating these opinions, in eradicating these prejudices, you will not act, I trust, in the spirit of proselytism, but from a principle of duty. When zealously defending the interests of that venerable establishment of which you will be an attached and faithful member, let there be nothing of bigotry or intolerance in your conduct to a dissenting brother: on the contrary, where his interests can be promoted, without injury to those of which you are the delegated guardian, there be your hand and heart ever open to his assistance. Steadily follow and teach others so to follow that which, in your judgement, appears the leading path to truth; but do not rashly and uncharitably conclude

that every other must terminate in destruction!

It is the most prominent among the many excellencies of our church establishment that her minister shall not be permitted to enter upon the very serious and responsible office, until his testimonials as to ability have been approved—his character and conduct diligently scrutinized before a competent authority; in short, the whole system of the clerical appointments approaches as closely as possible to the practice of the Apostolic age. The previous discipline of education—the qualifications insisted on—the forms of ordination observed: all are in conformity with the customs of the primitive church. It is also the wise and considerate provision of the Church of England that the means of growing wise to their dearest interests, the work of their own salvation, be placed within the reach of

all her followers. For this purpose, that every parish in the kingdom have its peculiar place of worship, solemnly dedicated to God, and consecrated to purposes of piety alone; that every separate Christian community be distinguished by its own peculiar minister—every flock entrusted to its appointed shepherd; the sphere of his exertions being purposely limited, that he may more effectually perform the functions of his sacred office. On all occasions, his Divine Master is to be his model in his endeavours to discharge the duties of his high station; humbly imitating him, he must be no "respecter of persons," and the lesson which he teaches within the walls of the Temple on each revolving Sabbath must be confirmed, as occasion may require, by daily admonition at the respective dwellings both of rich and poor. If they be in sorrow, it is his office to soothe them,—if in sickness, he must strive to smooth the pillow of suffering,—

if they be in doubt, he must convince them,—if self-desponding, uphold them,—if self-confident, reprove them,—if sinners, he must make it his especial labour to reclaim them. Their complaints must never meet his ear indisposed to listen to them—their tale of misery must never make its way to a breast too callous to appease them. It is true, unlike his adored Master, he cannot make the blind to see—the deaf to hear; but with that Master's Gospel in his hand, he may give eyes to the spiritually blind—he may give hearing to the wilfully deaf. He will convince his hearers that Christ is still with them in power if not in presence; that "his arm is not shortened that it can no longer save," but that, in fulfilment of his own promise, "he will be with them" to the end of time.

Trust me, my dear boy, these scenes of sorrow will tend much to win your own

thoughts from worldly contemplation, and fix them on the higher duties which you stand pledged to fulfil. When you behold one who came forth from the hands of the same God,—born to the same hopes,—destined to run the same race of earth with you, cut off in the meridian of his day, and recalled to the God who gave him being, you cannot but be won to profitable meditation on the uncertain tenure of your own existence. In some instances you will see this dssolution preceded by a long interval of sickness—a merciful interval for preparation; in others, a year, a month, a day, the briefly allotted space for the retrospect of the past; in other instances again, one short hour,—nay where the preceding *moment* has been health and animation, the next will bear the summons to eternity. Surely, you will exclaim, such awakening cautions cannot fail to bring the Christian's heart to the conviction that "all below is vanity,"

from imaginary enjoyment to reality of sorrow—from the love of a precarious life to thoughts upon his unavoidable death! If his own eye behold these daily spectacles of mortality; if his own heart *feel* that they are real; if his own dearest friends have given up this transient life, and gone to their inevitable grave, surely, you may ask again, he must be awake to the necessity for preparation. If these all fail to work conviction, well may I, the weak instrument employed to establish this important fact, though a minister of the Gospel, yet a frail and fallible creature,—well may I mourn over my insufficient counsel, and distrust my power to make men "wise to their salvation!" But so it is,—the world still lies in wickedness, though generations are swept away; this is the argument for exertion, not despair. You have the authority of the Gospel for the conclusion that, if "Moses and the prophets" be not heard, "one rising

from the dead will not persuade" men. The Gospel then must be guide to you and them—from its simply eloquent and intelligible page, labouring with all the earnestness and energy that an Omniscient God could bestow upon it, you must bend your time and talents to the task of winning them from the world around them to that which is to come.

Thus, my son, you will readily admit that the office to which you are now appointed is neither irresponsible nor unimportant. It is not to be denied that yours is a post of pre-eminence, but, be assured, it is also a post of peril, because of serious and weighty obligation. If your reward be great for duty well performed, proportionate will be your punishment for duty wilfully neglected.

Yours, &c. &c.

VISITING THE SICK.

LETTER III.

VISITING THE SICK.

My dear ——,

Of the various duties obligatory upon the Parish Priest, that of visiting the sick is by far the most serious and important, —it is a duty the conscientious fulfilment of which demands great strength of resolution, and some sacrifices of self-denial. In no instance does the wisdom of our religion more obviously appear than in the provision it has made for the presence and counsel of her servants at seasons when their presence is the most essential, and their counsel most especially needed. When the mind is distracted by the cares, the business, or pleasures, of the world, the warning voice

is heard to little good effect. The occupations or amusements of the past, the provisions for the present, and the future prospects of the worldly creature, engage his entire thoughts, and the precepts of Christianity retain but little hold upon his heart. With him the interests of time are every thing—the dearer interests of futurity are seldom permitted to arrest his attention. If the public exhortation of the clergyman win him to meditation upon his own uncertain state—if he be made to understand the superior value of the future over the present, the substantial joys of Heaven over the idle and transient vanities of earth,—if he be even prevailed upon, while under the influence of the awakening truths of the preacher, seriously to "commune with his own heart," it is but a temporary impression;—he carries not those pious meditations to his home and to his chamber; the counter charm of temptation speedily destroys the

good effects of the preceding lesson from the pulpit, and the following day finds the weak mortal pursuing the same career of worldly-mindedness and folly, in which the warning voice surprised him.

But with man brought low by sickness—with man subdued to reflection under the chastening hand of God, the case is widely different. If the Christian can at any season be brought to seriousness, if the thought of futurity at any period of his earthly pilgrimage can be profitably indulged,—if he is ever to be awakened to the strong conviction that time will, sooner or later, be lost in eternity—that there will be a day in which God will judge the secrets of every heart, bare to the sinner's view the recorded transgressions of his life, and award the sentence that will determine his fate through a long futurity;—it will be in

these moments, when Death seems about to assert his unsparing power; and demonstrate to the sorrowing creature, by an unanswerable *practical* argument, that, if he trust to *this* world for his happiness, he grasps at a fleeting shadow,—if he lean on this world for support, he trusts to a "broken reed,"—if he look to this world for consolation, he builds his hopes "upon the sand."

Those cares, and anxieties, and occupations, and amusements, which seemed to have taken such fast hold upon his mind, that no earthly counsellor, no friendly admonition, (save that which occasionally reached him during his ceremonial attendance upon the public worship,) were permitted to come near him—all, all fade in an instant before the appalling march of sickness and the possible approach of death.

He now, perhaps, for the first moment of his life, sees and feels the reality of those truths to which he had hitherto indifferently or incredulously listened. He is now made to understand that the lesson of man's mortality is no flight of oratory employed to amuse the fancy of the preacher, to win upon the ear of his auditor; but a heart-searching substantial truth. The vanities of life, derobed of their borrowed fascination, rise in their naked deformity to his view; and the sufferer, his soul divided between the clinging love of life and the dread of death,—between contrition for past offences and the fear of coming judgement, inwardly resolves, should God be pleased to spare him yet a little while—should he be permitted once again to mingle in the busy scenes of life—that if temptation assail him, it shall find him armed with religious courage to resist it; that he will "use the

world without abusing it,"—serve less eagerly the pleasures of the world, and more faithfully his God.

To a soul thus entering upon the threshold of repentance, you, that soul's earthly physician, are summoned to bear the balm of spiritual consolation. What an hour of responsibility is here! This man's salvation, under loftier merits, *may* depend on the strength *you* impart to his resolution—on the encouragement *you* give to his penitence. We are all weak offending creatures, and when the head is pillowed on the bed of sickness, the best Christian amongst us will have his misgiving at the heart. It is well if the remembrance of some positive sin, some commandment violated, prey not on his conscience—it is well if the sorrows of the soul add not to the body's affliction. When a life, not merely of duty neglected, but of sin per-

severed in, is disturbed by the casualties incident to our mortal frame, and the career of wickedness is suddenly checked, sad indeed is the retrospect of the sinner! awful the responsibilities upon the ministerial head! You have not to contend only with inbred, but with acquired corruption—not only with the sin to which his human nature is subject, but with sin made more sinful by wilful acts of rebellion.

It will be your endeavour, by forcible argument, by gentle persuasion, by a clear exposition of the mercies of Almighty God to sin repented of, his threatenings to impenitent transgression, to recover the lost sheep to his Redeemer's fold; to meet and welcome the prodigal on his return to his Father's house; to re-animate the "dead in trespasses and sins;" to remind the sufferer of the "joy in Heaven" over the sinner that repenteth; to redouble your efforts as you

behold him yielding to your arguments; to visit him again and again until his faith be confirmed,—his sorrowing repentance such as will not be repented of,—his acknowledgement of his sinfulness unfeigned,—and his trust in the mercies of God, through the merits of Christ, lowly, in reference to his own unworthiness, but confiding with respect to the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice upon the cross. Thus, if the sufferer be restored to health, you have for your recompense the strong hope that his life will be reformed; and if his sufferings close in death, that you have "turned the heart of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," and solaced a departing soul on its passage through the vale of death to the judgement-seat of Christ.

Your affectionate Father, &c.

PRIVATE EXHORTATION—THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

LETTER IV.

PRIVATE EXHORTATION—THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

MY DEAR ——,

You will not imagine that, because our Saviour made the circumstance of his preaching the Gospel to the poor one among the unanswerable evidences that he was the promised Messiah, that his Gospel was intended for the poor alone,—but that, whereas every religion, which had preceded the promulgation of Christianity, had consulted wholly, or chiefly, the interests of the rich and great, the Divine Author of the Gospel preached a doctrine which included all men of every degree in its merciful invitation;

but, at the same time, with an evidently partial feeling for the greater necessities of the poor. His Gospel was therefore especially calculated to assuage the sorrows and cheer the hearts and hopes of the poor.

I propose, in this letter, to bring before you some of the many evidences to be met with in the sacred Gospel in support of this position, that it was intended chiefly for the poor; it will then be an easy transition, from the practice of the Master, to consider that of his servant,—and thus to furnish you with appropriate matter for private exhortation in your visits to the poor.

In reply to the question of St. John's disciples, whether he were the Messiah or not? Christ sent them away with this convincing evidence;—he "raised the dead," and "he

preached the Gospel to the poor." In unison with this, we hear, on another occasion, this friend to the poor proclaim, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor."—This day is this Scripture fulfilled.—When the young man of great possessions anxiously accosted him, "What shall I do to obtain eternal life?" Christ, in reply, demanded, as the test of his obedience, whether he were willing to sell whatsoever he had, and give to the poor. What was his reproof to the haughty Pharisee? he bade him, when he made a dinner, or a supper, to call not his friends, nor his brethren, nor his rich neighbours, lest they also bid him again, and a recompense be made him,—but to call the poor, the maimed, and the blind, and thus that he should be

blessed and recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Numberless as were his miracles of mercy, the far greater portion of them was performed for the express relief of the destitute and poor. For these were his many, many acts of charity exercised. Power was held in little estimation with this considerate Teacher when it came in competition with poverty,—and wealth, and authority, and learning, preferred not such claims to his attention as indigence and distress, the companions of a lowlier station. When he entered into the dwelling of the proud and self-important Pharisee, the poor creature who washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, won more upon the notice of the compassionate Jesus than all the splendour of preparation before him. Whatever might be the importance of its object, the

prayer of poverty ever arrested his journey, and the relief instantly administered to suppliant faith sweetened the toils of a laborious and persecuted life. This was illustrated in his conduct when on the way to the ruler's house—his purpose was to restore the daughter of Jarius, lying in the cold grasp of death—to shed new life and rejoicing over the domestic circle of a rich and powerful ruler,—but this did not so occupy his thoughts as to exclude those feelings, ever predominant in him, of compassion and love for the poor. On the other hand, he *first* extended miraculous assistance to the importunate petition of the lowly sufferer who met him on his road,—and *then* raised the ruler's daughter from the bed of death. I might adduce precept upon precept, and example upon example, to prove the assertion with which I commenced this letter, that the Gospel, with all its various consolations, though delivered to all of every age, and

rank, and clime, were especially intended, by the Divine Founder of Christianity, for the hitherto-forgotten and despised poor. But I am anxious to hasten to the practical application.

It will not be so readily granted, nor can it be for a moment insisted upon, that the Gospel, its holy hopes, and promises, and precepts, are now so industriously and effectually inculcated upon the poor as in those days of infant Christianity. It were presumption, indeed, in the servant thus to measure the merits of his master by his own —but by laying down, for the regulation of your parochial duties, what I believe to be the present practice of the clergy of the Establishment, I will labour to prove that the Christian poor of this country are still the care of Jesus Christ, under the responsibility of his delegated ministers, that the "Gospel is still preached" to them

—that, under the example of its Author, and the instructions of the hallowed page, their efforts are directed to the same end—that the same "means of grace" are recommended—the same "hope of glory" held forth to their encouragement.

You will then be especially careful to impress these truths upon the hearts of your poorer brethren. There has been of late a disposition, on the part of the poor, to throw discredit upon every thing that bears the stamp of authority,—to undervalue the interest felt and acknowledged in their welfare by those who are placed over them—to be slow to the belief of their virtues, and quick to listen to their imputed errors. It is on this account, therefore, that I exhort you to convince them, both by precept and practice, that you, to whom their best and dearest interests are intrusted, have those interests deeply rooted at your heart. You

will assure them that, without their heartiest concurrence, your duty never can be done. You will prove to them that their spiritual guide is what he professes to be — with this accompanying caution, that the infirmity common to you and them, will ever prevent your being what you ought to be. Implore them to join their daily prayers to Heaven with your own, that God's grace may aid your infirmities and prosper your labours, and make you the happy and the honoured instrument, under the merits of the Cross, of their everlasting salvation.

The recent provisions of the state will have abundantly convinced the poor that their spiritual well-being has been especially attended to. Until of late it had been their serious and well-founded complaint, that, while the rich and great had easy access to the public services of their God, the poorer orders had to bewail, not the want of in-

clination or opportunity, but the absence of all proper accommodation. Their cry has not been raised in vain; at the express command of the highest authority, new churches have been erected in various parts of the kingdom—liberal assistance has been unhesitatingly given by those who had no interest in the change beyond that of their poorer fellow-Christians. The fruits of this fostering care are every where visible around us, and the poor may read in these newly raised hallowed temples of worship the brotherly love and considerate efforts of others for the comfort of their families and themselves.

Your duty, then, as respects these private exercises, lies straight before you. You will convince the poor under your charge that, as in the origin of Christianity, as in the doctrine and example of Christ, its founder, so in these days of its peaceful es-

tablishment among us, in the provisions of their governors, and in the lowly endeavours of the present fallible ministers of the Gospel, the truths of revelation are faithfully expounded to the poor. You will point out to them those passages in the Gospel on which the foregoing declarations are founded. You may then naturally ask them, and forcibly make your appeal to them, if their Saviour Jesus Christ has in his Gospel made such peculiar provision for their consolation on earth and their hope of Heaven, what must be their returns of gratitude, what their firm trust in their Redeemer's merits, what their uniform and cheerful obedience to his will and commandments! Those commandments, as more especially respect their situation and circumstances, are scattered over every page of the Gospel. Not only those serious services which are enjoined upon them in common with their richer brethren; not only the obligation of public

and private prayer,—of praise and thanksgiving, and lowliest humility, that handmaid of all the Christian virtues; not only the duties of husband, and parent, and child—duties and obligations binding upon man, whatever be the sphere in which he moves,—but those precepts also which more immediately affect the temptations to which poverty is exposed—the privations and difficulties with which a lowlier station has frequently to struggle. Among these you will remind them of the exhortations to honesty in their intercourse with the world, because the temptation to transgress this commandment is stronger to them than to those in easier circumstances;—to contentment, "in whatever state they may be placed," because the condition of the poor especially calls forth the exercise of this virtue;—to temperance, where the inducements to the opposite vice are manifold;—to industry, where there prevail so many evil promoters

of idleness, the parent of every crime;—to patience, and fortitude, and resignation;—to perseverance in well-doing, under every infliction of adversity;—and to a firm reliance upon the assurances of a happier reversion, far more than proportionate to the scantiness of their present provision.

The issues of your labours will be this—you will have fixed a strong impression on the minds of your hearers that there is a promise of future recompense for present privation,—that the Gospel contains that promise,—and that it is in this later day, faithfully held forth to the poor,—that, if there be an unequal distribution of ministerial watchfulness by the present teachers of Christianity it is partial only to the greater necessities of the poor.

Ever yours, &c.

PRIVATE COMMUNION.

LETTER V.

PRIVATE COMMUNION.

My dear ——,

There is a duty most intimately connected with your visits to the poor to which I particularly call your attention, namely, the private administration of the Holy Communion.* You will unhappily find (and I believe it is more or less the prevailing error of every parish in the kingdom) a reluctance on the part of the poor to receive the Sacrament, until their lives have

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* On this and some other subjects considered in these letters, the Author has purposely limited his observations, to avoid the repetition of what he has already explained in other publications.

been pronounced in imminent danger, and death seems unavoidable. In this last hour they hope to make their peace with Heaven, and when both mind and body are debilitated by sickness, to devote the wreck of the creature to his God. By a misconstruction of the Apostle's exhortation to the Church at Corinth, they conclude that, to fall from grace *after* they shall have received the Sacrament, is to subject themselves and their families to "divers diseases and sundry kinds of death." Had this been the error of the poor alone, you may well express your astonishment that the example of their superiors has not reclaimed them, but there will be found many among the higher orders of society who countenance this popular delusion. To remove these objections without treating the sacred ceremony too lightly, all your discretion will be necessary.

The language employed in this epistle is

certainly extremely strong, but the abuses against which it was directed were such as demanded the severest threatenings of punishment. To make that a feast of sensuality, which was ordained the hallowed memorial of a most tremendous sacrifice, was but to call down upon the head of the offender the wrath of an insulted God. Against such, it is true, "divers diseases and sundry kinds of death" were denounced, and our Church adopts the language of St. Paul in cautioning her followers to beware lest they receive the Sacrament "unworthily," lest they enter unprepared into the presence of their God; and while commemorating with their lips the sufferings of the cross, and *outwardly* acknowledging the atoning nature of the sacrifice, are not *inwardly* contrite for the sins of the past, nor resolved to forsake sin in the time to come.

Thus it will be seen that the threat is directed against the abusive reception, and is not to be applied to those transgressions into which we may be surprised *after* the reception of the Sacrament. Man is by nature prone to sin, but if he do not wilfully trespass on the divine mercy,—if he involuntarily fall from the grace bestowed upon him, and bring his contrite heart to the altar, plead his own unworthiness, and pray for remission through the merits of his Saviour's blood, you are instructed to assure him the threat will not be visited upon him, —his offering will be once more accepted, his sin once more forgiven.

While this is the error of some, there is a less timid class of persons who are in the habit of receiving the Sacrament, as they attend their church, from custom, or on the principle of setting a good example, without

any preparation of heart, without one serious reflection on the vital importance of the ceremony. It behoves you, beyond a doubt, to check the confidence of these unthinking formalists, who press unprepared into the presence of their God. To these may be timely applied, and with the hope of good effect, the Apostle's caution to the sensual Corinthian. Here the restraining hand may be safely uplifted—the danger to the unworthy partaker be here happily urged. In most instances of the latter description, you will have to deplore a lamentable ignorance of the sacrifice on which the Sacrament is founded. If it be imputed to some that they have drawn too general an inference from the Apostolic threat, it is the great error of others that they regard it too lightly. These deem it sufficient to partake in obedience to the command of their Saviour, without considering that they may

be sealing their condemnation by partaking unworthily; for not less fatal to the enlightened Christian will, eventually, be the celebration of this holy rite without sin repented of, and chastened resolutions of amendment, than were to the newly converted Greek his sensual excesses.

In both the cases to which I have alluded in this letter, and on all occasions, whether of conscientious hesitation, of fearful foreboding, or of sinful presumption, your duty will be (varying with the variation of circumstances) to descant upon the complicated sins of man,—the justice of an offended God, not to be appeased by any sacrifice but the sufferings and death of his beloved Son,—to make known the time when, and the solemn manner in which, the institution was appointed. And, above all, fail not to impress upon the hearts of all

the command which followed the first and holiest celebration, "This do in remembrance of me."

Your affectionate Father.

THE CHURCH SERVICE—THE LITURGY.

LETTER VI.

THE CHURCH SERVICE—THE LITURGY.

My last letter, my dear boy, embraced a subject of the highest importance to the spiritual prosperity of your parish—in my opinion, the weightiest among the many obligations upon the minister of Christ. I have purposely made the exhortation to visit the sick precede that upon the public services of our Church, because the experience of twelve years has taught me that one hour's serious and affectionate admonition in private, especially when sickness has brought the Christian to reflection, has more effect than the discourses of a twelvemonth, how practical and plain soever they may be, delivered from the pulpit.

You tell me you are not a little nervous at the idea of reading and preaching for the first time before an assembled parish; that you are convinced you have not sufficient modulation of voice to give effect to the prayers of our admirable liturgy, nor sufficient talent so to frame your compositions as to rouse the consciences and impress the hearts of your hearers. Believe me, I honour your misgivings, and the diffidence of your own powers, which these conscientious scruples betray, holds out to me the best security you can offer for your ultimate success.

The doctrines and discipline of the Church of England—the excellencies of her liturgy, that beautiful formula of devotion, wanting only the impress of divinity to make it a finished and a faultless work, the energy and beauty of its language—the piety of its prayers—and the close conformity of its service with

the hallowed page of revelation, have been made the theme of learned argument and persuasive eloquence, by men, whose arguments and eloquence would prosper whatever cause they might undertake to plead. You have not yet to learn the value of a national pre-composed liturgy; the obvious advantages to the whole congregation of prayers offered to the throne of grace in language understood by all. It would be foreign to my present purpose to cite here the numerous learned concurring authorities in evidence of ancient usage—of Apostolic practice; to point your attention to the labours of a later age, the Reformation of the sixteenth century, when the services of Christianity were cleansed from the pollutions of Romish superstition, and re-arrayed in that simple and beautiful garb which they had worn in the days of her infancy, the purest age of Christianity. I will, therefore, make some few observations on the

peculiar beauties of our Church service as they are embodied in the liturgy, such as may give you a more perfect acquaintance with them; for, be assured that, unless you perfectly comprehend the meaning of what you read, you can never give effect to the prayers, nor make them intelligible to your auditors.

You will naturally ask, where can be the energy, the earnestness of devotion, the confession of sin, or the petition for pardon, when the congregation is ignorant of the prayers to be offered—the nature of the sacrifice to be paid? When, on the other hand, the attention is previously awakened to the necessity, the duty of a confession, whose every petition is understood by every one who utters it, when the understanding and heart of the auditor move in unison with the zeal and earnestness of his minister, there seems a rational probability that

the ends of public prayer will be answered, the life of the individual reformed, and the character of the nation established. Whether it be to exercise our faith, to influence and animate our love, to uphold our patience, or to revive our hope; the supplications we offer to our God whenever we are assembled together to keep his Sabbath, and publicly to express our adoration of the mercies of his providence, are the fittest, we may presume to assert, for sinful man to use; the worthiest sacrifice finite can make to Infinite, the creature to his Creator.

That lowly acknowledgement of self-unworthiness,—that deep and unqualified contrition for the sins of the past,—that confession of guilt,—the resolutions of repentance,—the devout prayer for mercy,—the firm reliance on the promises revealed by the world's Redeemer,—and that lively hope of them through his merits and for his sake;

—in a word, that solemn general confession with which, fearfully and tremblingly, we approach the Present God, cannot but be as acceptable an offering to the throne of mercy as fallen and fallible man can prefer to the fountain of all purity, the God of all perfection. Here, then, you will contend for the superiority of an established form of prayer, for which the whole congregation is prepared,—the meaning of which the whole congregation may comprehend,—of the necessity for which the whole congregation must be convinced,—and the objects of which the whole congregation cannot but foresee. I dwell upon the advantages of a liturgy intelligible to the *whole* congregation, because there is not an individual in any of those numerous Christian assemblies which mark the revolving Sabbath—there is not one, be his rank or station what it may—prince or peasant,—man in authority or man dependant,—high or low,—rich or poor—

on whom the obligations of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, and lowly confession, and penitence, and humble reliance on loftier merits, are not strictly and irrespectively imperative. I will not, my dear boy, lay before you the several passages of scripture on which the foregoing confession is founded. You have not yet to be taught that, in every hallowed page of the Gospel, acknowledgement of error is the indispensable duty of the penitent ere he can pray or hope for forgiveness—that the cross of Christ is the only meritorious medium through which, on his real repentance and amended life, that pardon can descend upon him.

The same spirit of piety and wisdom that breathes through this the beginning of our service, is found to animate the whole. The collects appropriately annexed to the changing festivals, and clad in devoutly beautiful

and expressive language, command your instant admiration. The judicious selection of passages from the Holy Psalmist, embodying in their pious aspirations the sins and the sorrows of the penitent—the lively faith of the believer—the consolations of religion—and, under a conviction of sincere contrition and determined purposes of good, the firm hope of happiness to come; these furnish the transgressor, the *penitent* transgressor of every age and clime, with a model of humble, yet confiding, devotion, meeting all his misgivings and soothing all his anxieties at the heart—lifting him above the horrors of present despair to the certainty of future deliverance.

But, my son, the framers of our liturgy, had their holy labours rested here, could not have preferred that claim to the admiration and gratitude of the Protestant Establish-

ment which have been so abundantly bestowed upon them. They well knew that human compositions, however excellent in their nature and beautiful in their form, would fail to fix the heart, and win the soul to holier contemplation, unless aided by some powerful ally at hand to strengthen their operation, and, with the chastening voice of inspiration, to sanctify their labours for the everlasting good of man. Accordingly, that short but most comprehensive form of prayer which our Divine Teacher makes it imperative on all his disciples and followers to use, when addressing their petitions to their "Father which is in Heaven,"—that short prayer forms a portion of each distinct service of the liturgy, spreading its divine influence around, and shedding a holier character over the human efforts it accompanies and adorns. Thus, also, the Scriptures read from both the Testaments—the very language and doctrine of Christ himself,—

the inspired declarations of his prophets,—the acts and exhortations of his Apostles;—the commandments, also, comprising our whole duty to God and man, are scattered in eloquent profusion over the whole service of the Church.

But I have wandered widely from the original purpose of this letter. Were I to enlarge upon all the beauties which our unrivalled liturgy unfolds, — all the obligations it imposes upon her ministers, —all the claims it has upon the attention of the congregation, I should fill a volume instead of a letter; and, after all my endeavours, but feebly follow in the steps and re-echo the opinions of abler theologians.—I will not run the risk of injuring a cause which I am so anxious to prosper.

I hope sincerely that my brief allusions to the prominent beauties of our Church

service will induce you to study them more minutely. You, in your short time, have witnessed the decline of piety in the land,—you have seen the enemies to the cross of Christ redouble their hostilities,—you have also seen the lukewarmness of those who "call themselves Christians." To meet these dangers, the services of our Church will arm you with powerful weapons. I am firmly persuaded that the more our liturgy is studied, the more frequently its prayers are preferred to the throne of grace—the more probably will "all conditions of men" be won to greater reverence for their Bible; to a deeper adoration of their Redeemer; to a more trembling eagerness for the work of their salvation; and, consequently, to a livelier and better founded trust in those merits of the Master, on which the final hopes of the servant are suspended. In the hour of devotion, when they implore of their God an aiding arm to

shelter them, and a strengthening spirit to support them, they will know and feel for what important boon they pray—at the hands of what Almighty and Omniscient Being they ask assistance and relief.

Believe me to be

Your affectionate Father.

THE CHURCH SERVICE CONTINUED —THE DESK AND THE PULPIT.

LETTER VII.

THE CHURCH SERVICE CONTINUED—THE DESK AND THE PULPIT.

My dear ——,

In reading the beautiful service which formed the subject of the foregoing letter, there is one object which you must always endeavour to have before you, and one error which you must as constantly endeavour to avoid. The first, to impress your congregation with the feelings of devotion which the liturgy inspires;—the second, to abstain from all appearance of consciousness of your own impressive delivery, that the man may be forgotten in the minister. The consequences of your non-observance of these cautions will be most serious

in either case,—namely, the absence of all earnestness in the prayers of the congregation, and the probability that those prayers will be ineffectual at the throne of grace. Unless the heart be in the sacrifice, the incense is an abomination to the Lord. In giving you this necessary caution, I would guard you against possible abuses; the example of your brethren of the present day will, I trust, furnish you with but infrequent instances of this want of due devotion in the one case, and self-sufficiency in the other.

To be able so to manage and modulate the voice that the varying beauties may be seen in every varying prayer, is a gift of nature, the enjoyment of which is not the fortunate lot of many amongst us; but there is an irreverence, the growth of inattention in some, and of indifference in others, which is well nigh fatal to the hal-

lowed cause of piety. In avoiding this extreme, which is seen in delivering the prayers without energy, the lessons without emphasis, and both without devotion; you will do well to escape that monotonous delivery which may be considered the opposite extreme, repulsive to the ear of the auditor, and palling upon his attention. It is extremely difficult to preserve the mind fixed upon the sacred service, when under the influence of such a reader as this. But, mark me, there is an essential difference between the two; the last being a natural defect, which may have grown more defective by want of cultivation; whereas the first is the offspring of indifference, or something worse. You, therefore, will make it your especial care to avoid each extreme; you are in duty bound to do justice to the excellencies of the liturgy, with an express view to the devout deportment of those around you.

Your own good sense will direct you as to the quantum of devotion that is to mingle with the several parts of the service. The petitions, more immediately addressed, by the mouth of the officiating minister, to the throne of grace, seem to demand a greater portion of solemnity and seriousness than the lessons from the two Testaments, or the commandments addressed to the congregation at large. But if less of devotional manner be required (and you will bear in mind that I speak only comparatively) in the setting forth of these lively oracles of God, how much of impressiveness must be thrown into your voice and manner, when delivering precepts that fell from the lips of the inspired prophets, the chosen Apostles, the Son of God himself! If prayer, *duly preferred*, will bring down from Heaven supply to our want, consolation to our sufferings, and pardon to our sins; the Scriptures, by teaching us how we ought to

walk and to please God, will make the exercises of prayer easy and effectual,—they will instruct us how we *may* duly prefer it. Believe me, much of the benefit to be derived to the disciples of the Church from her public or private services, depends not less on the pious discretion, than on the zeal and talents of those who are appointed to preside over them.

We come now to that division of our Church service, in the estimation of many the most important,—in fact, the least. You will understand me to allude to the sermon. If we may judge from the conduct of some who seldom enter the church till half the prayers are over,* from their

* "If you have no confession of sin to make," said a clergyman to one of these tardy attendants, "and no absolution of sin to receive, what is your motive in coming to church?"

careless deportment through the remaining half, from their newly awakened attention to the preacher, and their animated and critical discussion of his discourse, I shall not appear to have fastened an unwarrantable accusation upon many of those who frequent our churches. But unless it be granted, that the reasonings of fallible man are of more value than the word of Infinite wisdom, the human commentary than the divine text,—the prayers formed upon that revealed word, and embodying its heavenly precepts, can never be deemed of inferior import to the exhortation which follows them.

As to your public discourses, I would say decidedly, begin at once to make your own. I am aware that I am offering an opinion at variance with many whose opinions carry with them more weight than mine. I confess, when first I entered upon the duties of my profession, I thought with

them, and concluded that I should have a fairer chance of success by preaching better sermons than I could compose. But habits are inveterate: and when I found it necessary to write, it was not without a considerable effort that I mastered the difficulty. You will say, perhaps, that sermons adapted to a country congregation will not suit a more enlightened assembly. Granted; but you will find your style of composition improving every year, and the labour of composing a sermon for a well-informed congregation is comparatively light to him who has habituated himself to comment upon the sacred text. The dissatisfaction you will express on re-perusing some of your earlier compositions will best confirm the truth I am endeavouring to establish—that perseverance in composing will gradually improve your style. Your business, however, will lie with a country congregation; it is not probable that you will, nor do I

think it desirable that you should exchange it for another. Your sermons, therefore, must unquestionably be practical and plain. I shall dilate upon the subject-matter of them more fully in my next. Your manner, as in the prayers, must be devout and impressive —the congregation must *feel* that you *mean* what you say, and if you *be* in earnest you will *appear* so. You will be naturally anxious to give effect to your own compositions, and the conviction on the minds of your hearers, that you are at so great pains for their spiritual welfare, will be no mean auxiliary to your success.

Yours, &c. &c.

DOCTRINE.

LETTER VIII.

DOCTRINE.

You will remember, my dear ——, it was the prophetic declaration of our blessed Lord, that there would be divisions in his Church—that "offences would come;" but he, at the same time, denounced woe against those who should cause these divisions. From the days of the Apostles to the present advanced age of Christianity, the church of Christ has been distracted by opposing opinions. "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," was the various cry of infant separation; and the page of ecclesiastical history, recording the acts of succeeding generations, is stained with the blood of angry and contending factions. The first

fruits of the glorious Reformation, the Protestant Church of England sprang to birth. But the labours of its first reformers, Luther and Calvin, at the same time that they purified the religion of Christ from the many errors that polluted it, sowed the seeds of future disaffection. The religion of this kingdom, as it is now established, was formed upon the doctrines of Luther; but there is a fruitful family, the descendants of Calvin, differing as widely from each other as they do all from their venerable parent. The clouds of error have thus, fulfilling Christ's prediction, perpetually shaded the fair face of truth; and thus will they continue to verify his declaration until the sun of Christianity, shedding a brighter beam from the passing shades that have hitherto obscured it, shall pour her cloudless light over the benighted world.

I have endeavoured to convince you in

my brief comments upon the liturgy, that our Church professes to uphold the doctrines maintained by the primitive Christians—the "truth as it is in Jesus." You have often heard me avow my conscientious belief, that the charge brought against the clergy of the Establishment is totally without foundation; a charge of so serious a nature, that, if borne out, must inevitably bring the most imminent danger to the clergyman and ruin to the cause. It has been the unqualified assertion of some that we do not "preach the Gospel" to our several congregations—that we insist upon the efficacy of good works without sufficiently inculcating the necessity of a saving faith,—that thus we undervalue the merits of the atonement, and grievously abuse our trust. In examining into this charge, with a view to its refutation, it will considerably limit the range of our reflections, if we consider the doctrines of our Church under the two general heads

of faith and practice. We have, then, to prove that the Gospel is still preached, the same in substance as it fell from the hallowed lips of Jesus, and in consistency with the commentaries made upon it by his immediate followers.

What we contend for, as the substance of our preaching, is this—faith in Jesus Christ, as the meritorious cause of man's salvation, and the practice of those duties which he requires absolutely of all, without respect to the person of any man, who hopes to be saved through the merits of his sacrifice. It is asserted, then, that the ministers of the Church of England, insisting upon this union of faith and obedience in their hearers, *do* preach the Gospel; that, were they to inculcate upon the Christian disciple the necessity of either as wholly independent of the other, they would *not* preach the Gospel; for this obvious and intelligible reason, that

the Gospel requires of all its disciples a profession of belief in its contents, made manifest to the world by the practice of those good works, which are there said to be its fruits. First, we must endeavour to ascertain in what this faith of the Christian consists; and, secondly, in what manner he is to make known to the world the faith which he thus professes. Let the volume of inspiration and the revealed word of God be our guide and authority.

In the beginning God created man, formed him out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life. Man was furnished with all things that could contribute to the happiness of an earthly being, the enjoyment of which would be forfeited only on the transgression of a divine command. One single prohibition was enjoined him; this was to be the test of his obedience; on the observance or non-observance of this

command, depended the continuance or the close of the joys of Paradise. The evil hour of temptation came, and man fell from his original innocence. Assuming the form of the wily serpent, the wicked spirit prevailed with his victim to eat the forbidden fruit,—to disobey the mandate of his Maker, and to bring down from Heaven the anger and the curse of an offended God. Hence the origin of sin; in this, the fall of Adam from his original innocence, all his descendants are involved. The curse of death denounced against him is in force against all who have since been born into the world.

But in the very hour of man's transgression, God, remembering mercy even in his wrath, gave the promise of restoration to life and happiness. A future Saviour was then promised, who should effect man's redemption from sin and death, destroy the

works of the devil, and by his voluntary sufferings, by the shedding of his precious blood, propitiate the mercy of insulted Heaven. A peculiar people, the children of Israel, were destined to preserve and keep alive these glorious promises of a Redeemer. To him succeeding prophets pointed—in him all their predictions centred. In the fulness of time, God sent his beloved Son from Heaven; gave him to be born into this lower world; permitted him to be persecuted, scourged, and buffetted; to endure every species of ignominy and insult; and to close a suffering life upon a torturing cross,—a punishment the most cruel and disgraceful that could be inflicted. All this was permitted for purposes of mercy to fallen and miserable man;—the Son of God underwent this humiliation for the redemption of a sinful world. The promise made to Adam was in that hour fulfilled,—"the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head," and

man was made capable of attaining to happiness, which, without this sinless sacrifice, had been beyond his reach.

But, happily, the history of our Saviour's earthly career ends not with his dreadful crucifixion. The grave had but a limited power over her prisoner, and the third day beheld him restored to life,—the dawning day of never-ending glory to the Redeemer, no longer persecuted, but triumphant;—not the infant in the manger,—the wanderer in the wilderness,—the sufferer on the cross, but the Lord of Glory—the everlasting King,—soon to be restored to the right hand of his heavenly Father, there to mediate between man and his Maker, and to complete the merciful work of his salvation. But, before he ascended into Heaven, he commissioned his faithful followers to "preach the Gospel," or the revelation of God's will which he had made to man, "to every

creature" under Heaven; to lay before them the conditions upon which salvation was offered to the world, and without a compliance with which, they could not hope to partake of the fruits of his sacrifice.

These conditions amount to what was proposed for your consideration in the beginning of this letter, namely,—faith in the divine mission of Jesus Christ; in his meritorious atonement, his resurrection, and ascension; in all that he has made known to the world concerning the nature of the Godhead,—the will of God with respect to his accountable creatures, — the blessings and the punishments of futurity,—and the practice of all those precepts which, during the days of his incarnation, he delivered to those " who had ears to hear." Among these were the first preachers of Christianity. That they preached the Gospel to " every

creature," to all of every degree as opportunity was afforded them, is evident from the recorded actions of their lives. That they were sincere in their zealous efforts to win the world to the faith of Christ crucified, and to the practice of what this faith implied, is equally evident, from the courage with which they encountered tribulation and death, calmly submitting to "present suffering as not worthy to be compared with the glory hereafter to be revealed in them." Thus it will appear, that to "preach the Gospel" is to impress upon the Christian congregation the necessity of such faith in their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as we have shown to be laid down in his Gospel, and of such obedience to his commands, such fruits of faith, as will best prove to the world the sincerity of their avowed belief.

It will, therefore, my dear boy, be your

duty, as the appointed minister of this Gospel, the delegated guardian of your Redeemer's word, to press these truths with fearless earnestness and zeal upon those committed to your trust. If you insist upon a *fruitless* faith as the *only* mean whereby they can be saved, you will not preach *the Gospel.* So, on the other hand, if you maintain that the very best of men, the most consistent in their Christian course, can, by any fruits of faith, by any works of obedience, lay claim to the promised salvation without reliance on the all-sufficient merits of Christ, after every most arduous effort, you will thus undervalue the cross of Christ, the sufferings and sacrifice of your Redeemer; you will endanger their hopes of mercy as well as your own, and, consequently, you will *not* preach the Gospel. Be their career of virtue what it may, they will be but "unprofitable servants when

they shall have done *all* that is commanded" them. On every returning sabbath, you will faithfully divulge these truths. With his Bible in his hands, it will be within the ability of every one who hears you to examine into your doctrine, by comparing it with the sacred text. It will be your business to teach them that they must not perversely dwell on any one difficult, perhaps, doubtful, passage of Scripture, but compare precept with precept. Thus, if it be the object of your exhortation to prove the absolute necessity of faith in the divine mission and ministry of Christ, as the foundation of the Christian character, your hearers must be cautioned not industriously to search out those passages of holy writ which have reference only to the performance of good works. So, if you recommend the indispensable practice of good works, your fidelity must not be called in question, be-

cause in other pages of the hallowed volume, faith is declared to be the passport to salvation. Teach them, on the contrary, to connect the precepts thus apparently opposed, and they will find the doctrines of faith and practice harmonious throughout.

Numberless declarations will meet the eye in which the commands to believe and to act are plainly and purposely combined. These will exhort them, in positive language, to "work out their salvation," but to do so "with fear and trembling," because it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; thus, in the same precept, establishing the free-agency of man and the assisting inward influences of the Holy Spirit of God. These will assure them, in the words of Christ, that not alone to call him Lord, but to do his will, will secure him eternal life; that

not the "hearers" only, but the "doers of his word," shall be accepted with him; that the exhortation to "repent" precedes the invitation to be "saved;" that they must bring forth fruits meet for repentance; that they must be "merciful," and "pure in heart," and "peace-makers," before they can be pronounced "blessed," and be called the "children of God;" that their "light must shine before men," who will "see their good works," and thus "learn to glorify their Father which is in Heaven."

On this foundation you will earnestly implore those "committed to your charge" to build their hopes of everlasting life; for such I conscientiously believe to be the enjoined faith and practice of the Christian disciple. He first learns to believe, and then proceeds to act consistently with that belief. He proves himself a follower

of Jesus by striving to do what he has *commanded* him to do. The soundness of the tree can be only known by the goodness of its fruit—if it bear none, "why cumbereth it the ground?"

Your affectionate

Friend and Father.

MINISTERIAL ZEAL EXEMPLIFIED.

LETTER IX.

MINISTERIAL ZEAL EXEMPLIFIED.

MY DEAR ——,

I WILL endeavour to relieve the monotony of these epistolary communications, and enforce the duties incumbent upon the pastoral office, by an illustration from the sacred volume. It will prove an attractive "portrait," and the fittest "study" I can recommend to the contemplation of the "young divine." On this, as on all other occasions, the word of God conveys a most instructive practical lesson. Our thoughts are carried back to the infant days of Christianity,—to that early age in which the mysteries of godliness were first revealed. We observe the weapons employed by

the immediate followers of Christ; the character of those sacred messengers all unfolded in those inestimable relics, the Acts of the Apostles; and given in that simple, but expressive language which ever clothes the records of the hallowed volume. As I proceed with the interesting history, I will point your serious attention to the several practical inferences.

"The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza; and he arose and went." Before we inquire into the purpose of his journey, let us glean the first valuable lesson taught to the present minister of God's word. Without an instant's hesitation, Philip followed in the path of God's appointment. He might have argued that the field for his labours was before him; that, beyond a doubt, the fertile

provinces of Samaria held forth a more abundant promise of fruit than the desert wilderness of Gaza. But, no! he eagerly and instantly listened to the suggestions of the messenger of God, and obeyed his holier impulse. This is among the many evidences afforded to the teacher and the taught, that humility is the path to duty.

. . . . .

"An Ethiopian of great authority" had "come up to Jerusalem to worship," and as he was returning, he "read the prophet Esaias." The chief circumstance here challenging your attention, and which, in the exercise of your clerical functions, you may profitably press upon your parishioners, is the description given of the Ethiopian,—he was a man "high in authority." You have the example of a man in an exalted station bending his whole mind to the study of the sacred Scriptures. He was returning

from the public worship, and so far from suffering his mind to return immediately to worldly thoughts, his interested attention is bestowed upon those lively oracles of his God, for the better understanding of which he had undertaken his pious journey. In improving this part of the subject, you will be naturally led to contrast the present conduct of the disciples of Christ with the deportment of the pious Ethiopian. How few of the favoured of the world, how few of the rich and great among the children of men, in this later day, forego the fervour of worldly business for the calmer worship of their God! Well may the Gospel exclaim, "Not many mighty, not many noble are called;" its All-wise Author well knew that the mighty and the noble would be among the last to embrace its faith and cherish its high commands. You will learn, therefore, why the good example before us was made

a beacon-light to others? you will learn to adore the provident wisdom and goodness of our Almighty Father.

The Jewish ritual, burthened as it was with ceremonies, was diligently attended to by this great good man. Hundreds of miles he travelled for its observance; temporal gave way to spiritual interests; and the eagerness with which he followed up the lesson he had been taught by studious reading, proved that his heart was in the service. Your own observation will teach you the unhappy contrast now! The Christian service is unencumbered with a single ceremonial burthen; it is, in the language of St. Paul, "a living sacrifice," and though a simple and an easy service, "holy and acceptable unto God." Yet how little labour is bestowed upon its duties! how seldom does study improve the lesson that has been taught! and why? because the *heart* is not

in the service. To the Ethiopian the word of God was a perpetual counsellor,—to the high in authority and station now, it is but imperfectly known, if known at all. It is listened to from habit, and is as habitually forgotten.

It pleased the Almighty, in his considerate mercies, that one who thought and acted so well should be won to think and act still better. The text has furnished us with the command given by the angel to Philip, and here I call your attention most seriously to the purpose of this summons, from the scene of his pious labours, to the wilderness of Gaza.

It would seem from the previous history that this zealous disciple of Christ was employed in prospering the cause of his crucified Master; an employment on the issue of which the well being of thousands,

perhaps, was suspended. Yet such is the care of Heaven for man, its favourite work; so steadily does the eye of God pursue the conduct of his creatures, that he commissions one of his holy angels to call Philip from his important work into a distant country, for the express and only purpose of conversion to the pious Ethiopian. His charge is immediately intrusted to others, and a dreary and a desert wilderness is the changed scene of his exertions.

It has been already observed that the Ethiopian was occupied, on his return from Jerusalem, in reading a passage from the prophecy of Isaiah; a fortunate study for the future prospects of the Ethiopian, for it pointed directly to the sufferings and death of Christ; and an important assurance to all classes of mankind, that the "ways of wisdom" are in the search of truth. The Ethiopian persevered in his inquiries after better

knowledge, and he eventually succeeded. On the suggestion of the Spirit, Philip ran to him, and addressed him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Mark his reply. "How can I, except some man should guide me?" How much of erroneous interpretation of the word of God! how much of unchristian feeling! how much of misery to the individual, and prejudice to the cause had been averted, had this same humility on sacred subjects been ever the character of the Christian Church! And will it not appear to you an obvious conclusion that no one should presume, *unassisted*, (humanly speaking,) to pronounce upon the doctrines, much less to fathom the mysteries of holy writ? Mystery must form some portion of a revelation from God to man; and if, after every laborious endeavour on the part of those who have been nurtured in the study of God's word, much will still remain mysterious to them, does

not the argument apply, unanswerably, to the ignorant and uninstructed? Yet are there many who will wrest the hallowed page to their own prejudices or evil inclinations, disdaining the warning voice, to which the Spirit of God would suggest a listening ear! It will be a becoming and a bounden duty in you to make known to your charge, that as the Bible must ever be their companion, so should the approved minister of the Church ever be their guide. *They* have avowed their belief in its tenets, and *you* have been declared competent to teach them.

The passage on which this good man was so intent was that beautiful prophecy which forms an appropriate portion of the most solemn festival of our Church,—"he was led as a lamb to the slaughter." "Philip began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

The Christian will readily image to himself the glowing application made by Philip of these strikingly pathetic allusions to the passion and the cross of Christ. He will hear him enlarging on his Redeemer's wonderful condescension in taking upon himself our humanity; on his patience under persecution; on his many miracles to the diseased; on his many mercies to the wretched; on his impartial censure of vice, whether clad in poverty or purple; on his zeal for his friends, and his forgiveness of his foes; but most especially on the unshaken courage with which he met the most unparalleled tortures. He will hear him, moreover, proclaim, that as God had created, and the Son of God redeemed, so would the Spirit of God guide man into all truth; as well in the wilderness of Gaza as amid the worshippers at Jerusalem. Such may the Christian disciple conclude was the scriptural exposition of Philip, when "preaching Jesus"

to this devout Ethiopian. The effect was immediate and decisive,—"the seed was sown on good ground;"—he "believed with his whole heart,"—he became a disciple of the Church of Christ. He was forthwith admitted into the communion of Christians; —an active believer, he had searched into the treasures of divine wisdom, and, by the saving mercy of his God, he had discovered them—he was immediately baptized.

A similar declaration of the "whole heart's belief" is in this brighter day of Christianity required of its disciple before he can be admitted into the covenant of grace. The conditions which this gracious covenant prescribes, must be attested by the sponsors of those who are too young to answer for themselves. By the most solemn obligations, they make themselves responsible for the faith and obedience of the infant

disciple. The question is substantially the same as in the infancy of Christ's religion—"Believest thou with all thine heart?" It must not be made an objection to the sacred character of the ceremonial, as it is now administered, that the contracting party are too often faithless to their trust. They will be awfully responsible for the charge they have neglected, and the non-fulfilment of the necessary conditions will assuredly be visited upon the heads of the unfaithful. The Sacrament of baptism still stands the hallowed threshold to the Church of Christ: ordained by him, it derives no impurity from the sins of its disciples. There is a sister sacrament where those sins, repented of, may be forgiven, under the atoning merits of that Redeemer who instituted both;—the Christian may pass through this, and again "go on his way rejoicing." It is well if the after conduct of the baptized

respond to the spirit of the Ethiopian's reply:—"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

There is one remarkable feature in this fruitful little history which must not escape your observation, since it serves to strengthen the assertion made in the beginning of this letter; that every individual, whatever be his rank or station, if he manifest a proper disposition of heart, becomes the immediate care of his All-merciful Father. When this commissioned servant of God had accomplished his important trust, and wrought conversion upon the Ethiopian's soul, we hear of him no more;—for this sole act of mercy had he been summoned from a distant country; and this sole act performed, he repaired to other scenes, where his presence and his preaching might work some new deliverance. "The Spirit caught him away,"—the new disciple "went away

rejoicing,"—and "Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea."

I have singled out, from numberless equally instructive narratives in holy writ, this history of the eunuch's conversion, as well on account of the particularly useful lecture which it reads to the minister and the people, as that I might from one instance teach you how to apply other historical passages of Scripture.

In pressing upon the consideration of your congregation what has been detailed to you in this letter, (and you may very materially improve the discussion,) I wish you first to awaken their attention to the efficacy that will ever attach to a close communion with the Scriptures. In public or in private, at church or at home, these must be their associates; their resources in

difficulty,—their comfort in tribulation,—their refuge in distress. No apology will be admissible for the neglect of them; the opportunity will ever wait upon the will. They may also learn from this bright example that the interests of a happy eternity are, under no imaginable circumstances, incompatible with the duties and pursuits of time. They are not only taught the obligations of public devotion, but the equally essential duty of after-meditation. *They* must also carry with them into the world the precepts delivered in the temple. *They* must muse upon them,—apply them to their own hearts, their own peculiar situations, their own besetting sins. And when, moreover, they learn from your commentary upon the subject the diligence and kindness with which this "man in authority" read to his servants around him the prophetic strains of Isaiah, they will gather from hence the necessity and the duty of in-

structing those who are dependant upon them, in the truths of heavenly wisdom. The services of family worship and family instruction come strongly and amiably recommended from this distant age.

You will also convince your hearers that they have numberless advantages which the Ethiopian never enjoyed; that they have not only Moses and the prophets, the companions of his solitude, and the guides of his conduct, but the preaching and the example of an incarnate God,—the registered acts of his followers—prophets, apostles, and martyrs, the good men of the Christian Church in every age. These are "a burning and a shining light" around them. Duty upheld by promises of present peace and future blessedness, "the life that now is, and the life that is to come." If they be sinners, there is a cleansing fountain to which they may, penitent, re-

pair;—if in temptation, if in doubt, as to what path they should follow, they have God's holy Spirit to strengthen, to assist, and to direct them. The journey through the wilderness of life has lost more than half its troubles to them. Clad in the armour of Christ, they may hail the passage through the vale of death as the necessary passport to a happy futurity; and the awful voice that bids them burst the sleep of death, and stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, may, but for their wilful blindness, be the herald of mercy and the messenger of peace.

I trust, then, you will not imagine, my son, that, because the age of miracle is past, and no revelation now *visibly* vouchsafed from Heaven, that the history holds not out a *practicable* precept to the minister of the present day. If God send not his mes-

senger to announce his will to his servant; if no commissioned angel point out to him his duty; there is, nevertheless, a resident spirit within him influencing him to good, and deterring him from evil,—a divine messenger immediately coming from the Father and the Son, to assist his infirmity, to confirm his resolution, to approve his virtue. It is true, he is free to follow or resist this sacred impulse, but the recording angel will register in the volume, hereafter to be opened, his obedient or rebellious conduct. Remember, therefore, my dear boy, whenever this inward monitor whispers to you that any particular duty should be done, you may image to yourself the angel of the Lord coming down from Heaven, the bearer of the Almighty will. Whatever be your employment, whatever your prevailing inclination, both must yield to the whispered mandate of your God. The example of

Philip will seasonably recur to your recollection, and the wilderness of Gaza be fruitful to your everlasting good. Thus will the "Scriptures" be ever found "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction."

Your affectionate Father.

EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

LETTER X.

EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

My dear ——,

Time is the most valuable talent committed to your trust. To the use or abuse of it may be attributed the good or evil of this probationary scene, and the consequent happiness or misery of the individual, each to all eternity, in the world to come. The prosperity of every situation in life, the success of every undertaking in which man may embark, depend on the judicious exercise of this great talent. But to the responsible minister of Jesus Christ time is indeed an awful trust. On the employment or neglect of *his* time may be

suspended the final safety or destruction of numbers. A letter, therefore, may be well occupied in considering this important subject.

There is a two-fold division of time, susceptible of various sub-divisions, according to the variation of circumstances, namely, duty and recreation. It may not unfrequently happen that, as, to the well-disposed, the indulgence of the one is centred in the fulfilment of the other, so, by the children of the world, the obligations of the first are forgotten in the abuses of the second. As man, when employed in the business of religion, in the services of his particular profession or station in life, in making provisions for his family, may still be said to be about his duty; so, when supplying exhausted nature with food or sleep, when indulging in healthful exercise, in useful and entertaining reading, or mingling with cheer-

ful companions, these may be considered but so many specific terms for their common genus, recreation.

The brief rules which I recommended for the arrangement of your time at the University, may be profitably applied to your conduct as a clergyman. That certain hours must be especially set apart for duty, is a maxim which will hold good in every walk of life. The advantage to the body's health of an hour's early exercise, to the mind's improvement of an hour's early reading, were among the first lessons inculcated upon you. There is a duty to be performed at the dawn and the decline of day, which, I trust, it is scarcely necessary to remind you must never be omitted—I mean the duty of family prayer. Your assembled family must unite with you in the prayer for protection through the night, and in devout acknowledgement of

God's mercies when that night shall have been spared you. They must also respond to your petitions for blessings upon the employments of the day, for the aid of the Holy Spirit of God. But suppose not that this "assembling of yourselves together" is to supersede the necessity for private prayer. You who have so many and such weighty obligations to fulfil, you must especially have recourse to prayer. The more serious the duties to be performed, the greater is the necessity for the divine aid. You have to pray that your daily labours may be successful; that, for this important purpose, you may be enabled "rightly to divine the word of truth," lest, unaided by succour from above, you lead those into error whom you would guide into truth; that you may be endued with patience, and wisdom, and courage, to "refute the gainsayer;" with power to uphold the weak;

with resolution, at all times, to do your duty, lest you, "who preach to others, be yourself a cast-away."

The ordinary *daily* duties of your parish will occupy much of your time. As some of these will carry you from home, at the same time that you are occupied in the business of your vocation, you will reap all the advantages of exercise. Excepting unusual cases of sudden illness, there may be particular times set apart for these walks of duty. It will be an object to you to become gradually better acquainted with all your parishioners. In these parochial visits you will have the opportunity of observing upon the non-attendance of some at their church on the preceding sabbath—on the habitual absence of others during the celebration of the Holy Communion. The arguments with which I have furnished you in my letter on this latter subject, will assist you to combat their ob-

jections or to remove their scruples. Others, again, will claim your attention who, from age or infirmity, have not been able to attend their public duties. These also need the advantage of your private counsel. Many there are who will tell you "they wished to see you, but did not like to trouble you;" such you will convince that it is their *duty* to trouble you—*yours*, to obey their summons; but few, however, will be found, unless diligently sought out, who will feel the inclination for your presence, until sickness shall have brought them to the bed of death. Be attentive, in your parochial visits, to observe whether the respective families of the poor have their Bible and Prayer Book. Your public discourses, even your private admonitions, will owe much of their efficacy to the zeal with which they compare the lesson they have heard from you with the precepts of the hallowed page. This not only confirms the exhortation given, but will

give them additional confidence in your instructions for the future. The establishment of District Committees by their venerable parent, the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, has enabled the poor to procure Bibles and Prayer Books at an easy rate. You, my boy, will, I trust, ever manifest the sense you entertain of the truly Christian spirit which governs these benevolent Institutions, by forwarding their charitable views with all the activity and zeal in your power.

To prosper the religious welfare of the rising community, the children of the poor, is another important employment of your time; let a portion of it, therefore, be given to the village-school. It were an endless task to enumerate the serious mischiefs resulting to the individual from the neglect of religious cultivation in earlier life. You will readily image to yourself many that mark the enor-

mity of crime—such as will prevail with you to lend a fostering hand to the early instruction of your own parish poor. The national system of education is adopted in almost every corner of the kingdom; nor have any institutions, branching out of our provident establishment, so much tended to promote the interests of Christianity in general, and to nourish and support the parent church in particular, as this most excellent system of explanatory instruction. To sow that good seed which is to develope itself in the future conduct of the Christian, the citizen, and the man; to encourage the growth of that good spirit in the child which will fix his character in maturer life,—to teach him his plain and intelligible catechism,—to instil into him those good principles which will enable him to withstand the torrent of licentious opinions and immoral practices,—these are serious

considerations for the parish priest, whose duty will not be done, so long as these services remain undone.

You are, doubtless, anxiously expecting to hear what restrictions I shall impose upon your freedom with regard to the indulgence of society. As one of the branches of recreation, I must not omit to lay down some rules for its observance. I will at once calm your apprehensions by the declaration that I not only do not forbid, but I really wish you to seek the intercourse of *all* your parishioners. What is to be the nature of that intercourse, as respects the poor, has been already discussed. Now as to the rich.

I have met with some few clergymen who make it a sacred duty never to join the social circle; who, while they sedulously seek the acquaintance of the poor, from

motives the most unquestionable, decline all communion with the rich. Though I assert, that among these may be found the most conscientious of our parish priests, the principal features of whose characters would most brightly adorn the "clerical portrait" I am sketching, yet I am so far from wishing to impute error to those whose conduct is the converse of these self-exiled clergymen, that I side, and without a moment's hesitation, with the social division. If it be, as undoubtedly it is, a paramount duty in the clergyman to make himself acquainted with his poor for the Christian purpose of knowing and relieving their necessities, of studying and amending their characters, of correcting their errors, or healing their sorrows,—surely, the rich have also characters to be studied, errors to be corrected, and sorrows to be healed. It is not the periodical visit of formality that will effect this; it must be the fruit of growing intimacy;—

not the mere morning interchange of unmeaning civilities, but (I speak it without the slightest wish to shrink from the responsibility of what I say) the cheerful society of the evening. I trust we live not in an age, and God forbid that we ever should, when the enjoyment of society and the abuse of order are synonymous. If such be the growth of social intercourse, the consequences will, in a great measure, lie at his door who had it in his power, by the influence of his chastening presence, to still the tongue or check the excesses of his companions. It cannot be, that to enjoy the communion of mind, nay, sometimes to descend to that *playful* conversational interchange of thought, which is the character of our society, is to tread upon forbidden ground! Wherefore did our Divine Teacher enter the habitations of the Pharisee, sit at meat with him, and mingle in the general

festivities? For this apparent reason—because he knew that social life afforded him new opportunities of studying and estimating man's character. Thus we, his lowly servants, treading in his steps, and imitating him "as far as in us lies," may make even the recreations of life the medium of imparting good. I am even disposed to give a wider latitude than is generally allowed to our Saviour's motives in joining the marriage festivities of Canaan. Be it admitted that his first and principal object was to consecrate, by his presence, the ceremony of matrimony; to strengthen, by the sanction of divine authority, the mutual bond,—by thus stamping upon it the impressions of divinity, to make the world more cautious of abusing it. But may it not be also inferred that he had some remoter purpose in his view;—to make manifest his approbation of the social intercourse of life; to clothe in

a cheerful and attractive garb the religion he brought with him from Heaven; to convince men that to embrace its belief is not necessarily to withdraw from the guiltless pleasures of the present; that Christianity might confirm while it chastened the innocent gratifications of life?

At the same time, be extremely cautious, lest you make that a *business* which is here conceded to you as a *recreation*. In the pursuit of occasional amusement that exercise which contributes at once to the relaxation of the mind and health of the body may be safely recommended; always providing that your pursuits derogate not from the responsible character which you have to uphold. Of course, there must not be an instant's hesitation between the duty and the recreation, should each at the same time court your acceptance. In the

choice of the latter, be this brief maxim ever in your remembrance—that whatsoever is indecorous in the man is disgraceful in the clergyman.

The circumstances under which you will be placed, the probability that one or more pupils will be intrusted to your care, make it imperative upon you to pursue you classical and mathematical studies. With many this renewal of their university labours has proved one of their chiefest recreations. These hours of reading may be profitably and agreeably varied with history, sacred and profane, voyages and travels, the biography of eminent characters, and other illustrations of men and manners, both instructive and interesting, with which this literary age abounds. The fruits of these, your lighter occupations, you may carry with you to the tables of your friends, and the obser-

vations you will severally exchange will prove a delightful and beneficial amusement.

Reserving some further remarks for my next domestic letter,

I remain,

My dear boy,

Your affectionate Father.

HOME.

LETTER XI.

HOME.

It is a dearly bought truth, my dear boy, with which life's experience will furnish you, that there are no pleasures so unmixed, no enjoyments so pure, as those you will meet with at home. You will, perhaps, be incredulous to this assertion; at your age, I listened very doubtingly to my monitor, when expatiating upon the same useful theme. But, believe me, I now most readily confirm, as I most strenuously enforce, the domestic lesson then imparted to me. The current of youthful blood flows too rapidly, the fever of youthful passion runs too high, for the sober entertainment of this interesting truth. It will not come home

with all its force to your heart until you shall have experienced the insufficiency of other enjoyments to your real happiness; the instability of other friendships; the insincerity of other professions. The "gold that glitters is not the most precious;" homely as this proverb is, it will apply to the greater portion of those enjoyments which are sought *from* home. Pleasure will wear a more alluring form, and seeming friendship hold forth more flattering inducements, but the syren smile of the one will too often lead to the paths of danger, when you will look in vain for the helping hand of the other. "*Revocare gradum*" is the ineffectual wish of numbers who have ruined their reputation, and "wasted their substance in riotous living," when they might have partaken, at the same time that they contributed to, the guiltless gratifications of home.

In such a chequered world as this, there can be no picture drawn without its darker side, but where, to borrow a familiar expression, the heart is in its proper place, and the eye is not disposed to look at life through a distempered medium, you will, I firmly believe, meet with less of sorrow than of satisfaction.

If home hold out so many charms to men of all conditions and circumstances, these charms come doubly recommended to the country clergyman. It is very desirable, nay, absolutely essential, that his pleasures (I use the word clerically) should never lead him far or frequently from his parish. The "parson's week," as it is deridingly termed, is an unsafe latitude wherein to indulge. The house of merriment to day may be the house of mourning to morrow. Joy may illumine its chambers when you leave it, and heaviness may darken them ere you

return. Death may have set his mark upon that house; suffering may have poured forth her sorrows unpitied and unsolaced; doubt mayh ave been still wavering to the last; and sin still unrepented. A *day* or an *hour* will furnish this lesson of mortality—a *week* is often an eventful period indeed!

But do not mistake me,—I should be truly sorry to make the precept unpalatable by requiring too much. I do not say, "never go from home," but do so rarely; and never without the conviction that your parish is in the custody of some faithful friend. A ready interchange of good offices is one of the characteristics of the clergy of the establishment. Be it your especial care not to abuse the opportunities of occasional absence which this inter-parochial courtesy will afford you.

As home will thus be the centre of all your

movements, whether of business or pleasure, whatever contributes to that home's gratification will necessarily be an object of attainment. Beyond a question, a wedded life lends to our home its chiefest and best satisfactions; nothing tends so directly to limit the circle of our occupations, our amusements, and our cares; nor is there any situation of life wherein a woman can be placed that gives her more frequent opportunities of being useful, and becomingly useful, than as the wife of the country-clergyman. His parochial duties become lighter by her participation in them; his home is enlivened by her, the mistress of it, at once the companion and the solace of his daily occupations.

These are consolations in life, my dear boy, altogether independent of its pomp and dissipation. Without the aid of wealth or high station, the happiness of domestic

life may be said to be complete. Though it were not your lot to be beyond the reach of temptation from worldly vanities, your mind, from the sober character of your pursuits, would be above it. You will have less cause for regret, at the close of life, that you have been denied its luxuries, since you will have had fewer inducements to neglect its duties.

On your own exertions will depend the probabilities of your being able to make this addition to the happiness of your home to which I have now alluded. Believe me, I will never oppose your rational wishes in this respect. You never will be rich; but do your utmost for yourself, then rely on whatever assistance I can give you without injury to others, who also look to me for support. At the same time, let me caution you not to fall into that error so common to the young of all professions, namely, to

seek and make engagements, of which the probable fulfilment is far distant, thus involving the object of your attachment as well as yourself in numberless difficulties. During the first few years of your clerical appointment, to learn your duty and to do it, will be the great object of all your wishes; you will have much to do to become conversant in all its branches. When the duties of life are punctually performed, it is rare indeed that they are unaccompanied by life's consolations.

Your affectionate Father.

THE BIBLE AND PRAYER BOOK.

LETTER XII.

THE BIBLE AND PRAYER BOOK.

My dear ——,

In a former letter upon the proper employment of your time, I made a brief allusion to those useful institutions branching out of the parent society, the District Committees for promoting Christian Knowledge among the Poor; I should neglect an important duty did I not say a few words on the subject of other societies, the children of a different parent.

When I tell you that it is the object of these charitable institutions to circulate the Holy Scriptures among the poor at home, and to preach "Christ crucified"

among those who "sit in darkness" on other shores, you will naturally be surprised that two such venerable parents should not go hand in hand in promoting their benevolent and truly Christian designs. You will naturally say,—surely, there cannot be a difference of opinion as to the propriety, as to the obligation, upon every disciple of the Church of Christ to disseminate among his fellow Christians and his fellow creatures those good books which will make them "wise to their own salvation!" That each society has this glorious end in view cannot be for a moment doubted. As a Christian and as a man, you will eagerly join with me in the ardent prayer that, under a powerful, though imperceptible, guidance, by "a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm," the cheering light of the Scriptures may continue to illumine the remotest and darkest corners of the earth. It cannot but be a grateful reflection to the disciples of Christi-

anity, that, as well from the extraordinary exertions of individuals as from the purity of the common cause, their labours of love are reaping an abundant harvest, not only at home, in the soil best calculated to repay their holy toils, but in hitherto barren and unprofitable deserts.

But it is not only as a Christian and as a man that you will regard these mighty sister Institutions, (for, so far as we have hitherto considered them, they may be truly said to be united in their objects,) but as a Christian clergyman also. And here you have to learn, that, whereas it is the object of both to spread the saving truths of the Bible over the face of the world, the one has an additional and most important object in her view, namely, to recommend the doctrines of a particular creed, the liturgy of a particular church, expressly and intentionally circulated with the Bible, that the world may

see on what good basis her tenets are founded, on what good and unquestionable authority her peculiar opinions are formed.

Here, then, subsides that sisterly union which had thus far prevailed. Hence may you easily conclude that the one Society emanates more immediately from the Established Church,—the other, from those who are conscientiously opposed to the Establishment. But do not hastily infer that I therefore consider the support of each as incompatible with the fidelity of the Churchman. So long as the regulations of the Bible Society are complied with, and the Bible circulated without *note* or *comment*, I cannot conceive that the interests of the Church will be endangered, or the fidelity of her supporters compromised, by the assistance they may give to the rival Institution. But, be it repeated, it is to you, as the appointed servant of the Church of England, as the

sworn protector of her interests,—as bound by the most serious obligations to recommend and uphold her principles;—it is to you, as the chosen shepherd, the chosen *minister* of this Church, that I address my cautions. The objector will, perhaps, exclaim here,—And can those interests be hurt by the more general circulation of the Bible? I answer,—Certainly not; the interests of the Established Church are so interwoven with those of the Gospel, that they will rise or fall together. But with this the clergyman must unite an especial vigilance over the particular interests entrusted to his keeping. The Apostles, the immediate followers of our Lord, did not content themselves with merely circulating the Gospel of their Master, they made it their daily duty to explain it—they laboured to make manifest to the world the peculiar principles on which the infant Church was raised. So it is with us: as fellow Christians, we must do

our utmost to lead our fellow creatures to the truth,—but, as the delegated defenders of the Church of England, we must explain to the world on what her peculiar worship is founded; and believing it to be the rational interpretation of the word of God, we must leave no opportunity neglected of sending conviction to the hearts of others. On this account, with the Bible we circulate the Prayer Book; in common with the services of our dissenting brethren, we put the Bible into the hands of the poor, and exhort and encourage him to "search the Scriptures;" but we also place the Prayer Book in his hands that he may compare the text with the interpretation—that he may rightly regulate his devotions, and be armed, by competent authority, with a "reason of the hope that is in him," against the misconstructions of the ignorant or the designing, whom he may encounter in the world.

With this view of the controversy, (for to such have the varying opinions of individuals unhappily led,) I am at a loss to account for the *motives* of those clergymen who strenuously uphold the interests of the one Society to the total neglect of the other, which may justly be called their own. It is easy to enter into the feelings that influence them to lend a helping and a charitable hand to so Christian a work as that of enlightening the darkened soul under whatever clime it may be found; but it is not so easy to account for that lukewarmness in a cause to which they are most solemnly pledged; —on the one, their time and toil, their personal and active labours, unceasingly expended; on the other, scarcely an annual acknowledgement of its existence bestowed, as if it were alien to their interests, and unconnected with their duty!

May such a serious charge, my dear boy,

never be brought home to you. Do good wherever you can do good, in the true Samaritan spirit of the Gospel; but beware, lest, when dealing out Christian charity to a fellow creature without a bigoted reference to his particular opinions, you neglect those Christian duties which are binding upon you by so many sacred ties. The one may be done—the other must not be left undone.

Your affectionate Father.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

LETTER XIII.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

My dear ——,

I have hitherto commented upon the customary stated duties which the clerical appointment imposes upon its minister, the same in substance from day to day, from year to year; varying not in nature, if occasionally in degree. Every day brings with it some parochial duty to be performed, some portion of private exhortation to be given; every Sabbath the sacred services of the temple; every month the public communion of the Holy Sacrament; every tolling bell proclaims the necessity for additional watchfulness; every closing life reads us its mournful lesson of man's mortality.

But there are some offices in our church of less ordinary occurrence. Such is the triennial ceremony of Confirmation. Here, as a new responsibility opens to your view, a new caution seems required. I will suggest to you such rules of previous discipline as may tend very materially to lighten the load of obligation which the office of confirmation brings with it.

The Sacrament of Baptism is introductory to the ceremony of Confirmation. In the first, a promise is expressly given by others in our behalf; in the second, we take this promise upon ourselves, namely, that we will faithfully act up to the provisions of that covenant into which, by baptism, we have been admitted. These provisions are so intelligibly set forth in the Catechism as to render any further explanation superfluous. But, by diligently and strictly enforcing upon the several sponsors for infant baptism

the very serious responsibilities they take upon themselves; by adding to the valuable exhortation with which the liturgy will furnish you, some strengthening admonitions of your own; by inducing them to consider as a duty of weighty obligation what they now undertake without any consideration, you will do much towards the removal of the prevalent abuse of the ceremony; and there is greater probability that the provisions of the Christian covenant will be more punctually complied with; that the works of the devil, the sinful lusts of the flesh, will be more steadily abjured; the Articles of the Christian faith be more thoroughly understood and embraced; and God's holy will and commandments be more resolutely obeyed. You will have less reason to lament that light and heartless conduct which too commonly accompanies these most serious services; that ignorance, in some cases, of the nature of the baptismal vow, and that

indifference to it, in others, which is so frequently betrayed by the young candidate for confirmation.

Your first duty, therefore, will be to possess the youthful mind (wherever this has been wilfully neglected by those who undertook the trust) with a due sense of the blessings conditionally secured to them through the Sacrament of Baptism; and of the conditions under which those blessings were imparted. You will tell them wherefore the cross was marked upon their foreheads; you will teach them that by baptism they are regenerated, or born again; that is, that they died unto the sin, which, in common with all mankind, they inherited from Adam, and rose again unto a life of grace, through the merits and sufferings of Jesus Christ. That their hope of inheriting the "precious promises," brought by their Redeemer, depends on the fidelity with which they labour

to do his will; that the will of God is beautifully embodied in the ten commandments; —this moral code being yet further illustrated by the explanation which our church has given of it, showing that these commandments comprise all the duties they owe to their God, their neighbour, and themselves; an explanation so happily modelled on the simplicity of the Gospel, that the child may readily comprehend, and be as readily instructed to apply it. But that as all our works must necessarily be imperfect, as man is continually exposed to temptation from without and from within, from outward enemies and inward corruption, he is, therefore, constantly exposed to the danger of falling from this state of grace; that there is another sacrament ordained whereby his strength may be renewed, his penitence accepted, and his sins forgiven.

Our church, you will further explain, has,

in its wisdom, provided that this second sacrament shall not be received until the Christian shall have, in his own person, confirmed the promises made for him by his sponsors; that he will then be of an age supposed sufficiently mature for the comprehension of the awful character of the communion; that he will then partake the represented body and blood of Christ; avow his faith in the merits of the sacrifice; pray for the aid of his Spirit, and resolve to walk in the way of God's commandments.* Nor can the preparation required for the due reception of this hallowed rite be urged in more strong and impressive language than in the last response of the catechism.

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* All that has been said in the preceding letters on this subject may be also made the theme of instruction here.

Of those occasional weekly duties, which the services of the Church require, that of consigning to their graves, as they severally fall from life, the objects of all your solicitude; those whom a lengthened intercourse, the peculiarity of situation and circumstances, have especially endeared to you; this is, indeed, a melancholy office to the village pastor—it is one of those inevitable sorrows which saddens our journey through the wilderness of life. There is an irresistible solemnity in the funeral service,—it cannot fail to reach the heart not only of the immediate relative, but of the casual listener. Fail not, then, to give to this beautiful passage all the effect which it so richly deserves. The language employed in it is happily intelligible to the common people. The analogies of natural life—its birth and growth, maturity and decay—and its revival in a newly animated form,—are eloquently brought to bear upon the human

body's progress from being to corruption, and its future resurrection to a new and a happier life.

But you will be occasionally called upon (and it will be sometimes your duty even where you are not) still further to improve the moral lesson from the pulpit. Afflictions, you will teach your hearers, are in mercy sent to wean them from this life and to fix their attention on that better world whither their friends are gone before them. Can they, you may ask them, can they conscientiously lay their hands to their hearts and say, that they have not, in a great measure, deserved the visitation that has fallen upon them—that they have not provoked God to anger? While you, the earthly shepherd of their souls, are labouring to bring down the divine blessing upon your flock, have they the conviction on their minds that their efforts have co-operated

with those of their teacher?—that your instructions have sunk deep into their hearts?—that they have renounced those pursuits which you, on the authority of your divine Master, have pronounced dangerous to their hopes and destructive to their peace?—that they have resisted a favourite temptation—a besetting sin?—that they have opposed your precepts to the crime that courted their compliance?—in a word, have they the assurance at their hearts that, had the summons been to them, they were prepared to meet it? If no such conviction abide upon them; if their consciences condemn, and their hearts misgive them; if the world and its follies be idolized, God and his promises forgotten, or set at nought; if they be not, in such moments of reflection, by such warning chastisement, won to repentance, faint are their hopes of restoration to the friend they have lost; in vain will your labours have been expended upon them;

their own unworthiness will have rendered your fervent prayers of no avail, and they will be undone for ever. At the same time, let them be assured that the favourite attribute of the Almighty is mercy—mercy for which no one might presume to hope but through the powerful merits of a crucified Redeemer. Mercy is promised to repentance. God hears the prayers and sorrows of the meek, the contrite, the heart-broken penitent. In the hour when most they need Almighty aid, in the "hour of death, and in the day of judgement," God will be with them.

Believe me,

Your very affectionate Father.

CONCLUDING LETTER.

LETTER XIV.

CONCLUDING LETTER.

My dear Boy,

Though I have endeavoured to condense as much useful matter as possible in the foregoing letters, yet do I find myself compelled to make this my last, while much remains unsaid. I undertook to furnish you with a *compendium* of duty, and I will not abandon my original purpose. I have not now, I hope, said more than you can remember to your improvement of the sacred trust committed to your care.

I have addressed you, my son, in language of serious admonition, as the appointed guardian of the interests of the Church of

England, intimately connected with those of Christianity,—the interests of an unseen world. I have laboured to convince you that this venerable parent is ever on the watch to do good, and especially to her own "household of faith." Her temple rears its sacred head for all who are willing to enter it—her school of moral, and religious, and useful instruction is open to all the children of the poor. Admitting that there may be other paths to heaven, under the merits of the common sacrifice, she steadily follows that which she conscientiously esteems the proper one. There are many doctrines taught as those of Christ and his Apostles; she promulgates what she honestly believes to be "the truth as it is in Jesus." There are many valuable volumes of morality; her code of morals is gathered from that book which she knows to be a good one. The Church of England would have all her children *wise* enough to understand those duties which terminate in everlasting

happiness; for "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" she would have them all *good*, because the good alone may entertain a well-grounded hope of heaven.

To this hallowed fountain, whence so many streams of saving benevolence have flowed;—to this nursing parent of so beauteous a Christian family, I have anxiously directed your attention. If, in my ardent desire to uphold a creed to which I am conscientiously attached,—if, in the endeavour to guide your faith and animate your hopes, I have transgressed the limits of that "bond of all virtues," the "excellent gift" of Christian charity,—if I have overstepped the bounds of that moderation which has won for the Church of England the love and fidelity of her supporters, and the admiration of her opponents;—I would address myself, through you, to every militant brother; and, re-

gretting an exercise of "zeal not according to knowledge," pray in the spirit of our liturgy, that on earth, as we hope to be in heaven, we may be "one fold under one shepherd."

If, as a minister of the Gospel, it shall be your happiness to impress your parishioners with the conviction that you are, in the best acceptation of the word, their friend, —that, though you are but the human agent, the medium between Christ and his church, between the Redeemer and his redeemed, that it is your object, your inclination—above all, that it is your *practice*, to guide your little flock unto those paths which terminate in the vale of peace, where their "good shepherd" awaits and will welcome their coming—if you prevail with them to keep the path by watchfulness, by zeal, by all those many cares and assiduities which characterise the "true shepherd"—if, to

drop the metaphor, your hearers shall have made the precepts of the Gospel, which you have inculcated upon them, their rule of life, and the example of their Redeemer, which you have enforced, their guide to duty,—if you shall have convinced them that it is God's good pleasure to give his kingdom to all who obey him perseveringly and serve him faithfully,—I know not whose *life* can be more fruitful of present peace or future hope than yours.

But, my beloved boy, that grave, to which, in the exercise of your sacred duties, you will have committed so many of your friends, will, sooner or later, be your dreary home. That moral improvement of the frequent ravages of death, which you will have so frequently impressed upon their most serious attention, will then be furnished by your own. The master and his disciples, the shepherd and his flock, are alike borne

to that long home whence no one may return to earth.

If, after a laborious life past in the service of your fellow-creatures, for their happiness in time, their bliss in eternity;—if, when called upon to "give an account of your stewardship;" to leave this, the scene of your probation, and resign into the hands of your master the commission entrusted to your fidelity; you shall die in peace, blest in the consolatory hope that God will be with your charge;—if, when that warning voice, which, in season and out of season, has affectionately but fearlessly taught them their duty, in the temple and in the cottage;—if the truly pastoral zeal with which you have corrected their infirmities, amended their lives, and softened their hearts to the providence of Christian wisdom,—that active charity, ever visiting the fatherless and widow, cheering them in

sickness, and consoling them in death,—that pure and undefiled religion, which has led you to combine personal correctness of conduct with a feeling and benevolent heart for others;—if, when that warning voice shall be for ever silent, that ardent zeal arrested, the upholding hand and cheering heart, the one powerless, the other cold, that personal virtue checked in its good career;—if thus you shall have lived—I know not whose *death* can be more truly the departure of the Christian, more calm and happy, more acquitted of the life that now is, and more hopeful of the life to come, than yours.

If, my dearest boy, you would gladden a father's heart in life, and cherish his memory when dead, you will endeavour to become the original of the portrait I have drawn for you. It is a weak endeavour to do a great good. I fervently hope my own practice will be improved by the lesson here given to you.

How cheering then to you, to me, to all we dearly love, will be the reflection, that a life of piety and usefulness, under the only sufficient merits of Christ, will be rewarded with the sentence, "WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

God bless you, my dearest boy, and guide you through the many dangers of time to the many blessings of eternity!

Your most affectionate Father.

THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 11, line 4 from bottom, *for* their, *read* your.
— 22, — 14, *for* or, *read* on.
— 24, — 11, *for* appointments, *read* appointment.
— 27, — 11, *for* dssolution, *read* dissolution.
— 33, — 5 from bottom, *for* her, *read* its.
— 47, — 7, *for* Jarius, *read* Jairus.
— 54, — 9, *for* issues, *read* issue.
— 94, — 12, *for* hopes, *read* hope.
— 134, — 6 from bottom, *for* divine, *read* divide.

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